Translator’s Foreword

Hi hi~ o(□□•̀∀•́□□)o Thank you so much for reading my translation of the new SVSSS extras from the CN hardcover release! □This past week has been so fulfilling—I’ve poured a lot of love into translating the extras, and all of your kind comments and thoughtful insights on the new content have meant the world to me.

There’s really no such thing as a perfect translation—but I’ve done my best to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap between English-speaking scummies and the text itself. Sometimes that meant taking small liberties with things like internet slang, memes, or sayings so they’d feel natural and alive in English, while still staying true to MXTX’s voice. Hearing that so many of you found it authentic and easy to read honestly makes me so happy. Knowing that the emotions resonated with readers really makes all the effort worthwhile □

I’m not the best with words haha, but truly, it’s been such a wonderful journey! To those of you who’ve followed along as I worked through the translation, thank you for coming with me~ And if you’re new here, welcome! I hope you’ll enjoy your stay □□

(Honestly… at this point I feel a bit like SQH, bound by some translator’s holy duty to keep updating every day hahaha~ Someone stop me before I start making up extras of the extras 😭✍)

– Jin, 2025.11.09

(p.s. please don’t forget to read all the T/N notes at the end~)

FAQ:

1. I cannot provide the raws, sorry □♀□♀□♀I bought the new release myself and translated directly from the physical book.
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Special thank you to @tea_mune (aka @yujacha1340), my friend, for believing I could pull off an amazing translation—to the point that she's willing to quit X for two weeks to avoid spoilers XD ily Tea—keep making great art!

"The Homecoming" □□□

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Chapter 1: Return to Reality

"Of course. You will *never* find a trashier piece of web junk than *Proud Immortal Demon Way*. Whoever likes that kind of garbage, I'll look down on them for life. Their taste is beyond saving!"

Shen Qingqiu laid on the hospital bed, a smile frozen on his face. He waited patiently as the young intern doctor ranted to his heart's content, gesturing wildly while taking every chance to slack off. Only after the doctor marched out of the room, full of righteous indignation, did Shen Qingqiu finally turn his head, expressionless.

"A miscalculation," he said flatly. "Turns out he's a *hater* of your novel. Look what you've brought upon us."

Shang Qinghua slumped down in despair, looking as though his soul had left his body. He wailed, "You're humiliating me… Cucumber-bro! How could you just sit there and watch someone humiliate me like that!!"

Shen Qingqiu's temples throbbed in pain. With a sharp tug, he yanked the curtain between their beds close.

"That's enough!"

Well, it's a long story, but we'll keep it short.

In a nutshell: On some fateful day, Shen Qingqiu and Shang Qinghua both received a notification from the system.

System: Special Notice! The item shop has launched a Lunar New Year Gift Pack Event!

System: In recognition of the Host's long-standing exemplary performance, you may exchange 50,000 satisfaction points for one (1) "Homecoming Gift pack." This pack allows the Host to spend one week in their original world!

…What?

Shen Qingqiu was completely stunned.

"Wait, hold on," he asked, "I thought I died in the real world? How am I supposed to go back? And what will happen if I do?"

System: Upon verification, the Host's physical body in the original world has not died. It is merely in a state of suspended consciousness.

What???

He wasn't dead?

But wait, that didn't make sense. Food poisoning shouldn't put someone into a coma. Could it be that…he'd gone into shock out of sheer rage at the *Proud Immortal Demon Way*?

Now *that* would be a new level of tragic.

System: This gift pack is a limited-time offer. Expired items cannot be reissued. Please confirm your redemption immediately.

Was there even a need to think about it?!

Shen Qingiu and Shang Qinghua exchanged an agreeing glance.

“Confirm!”

The plan was simple enough: purchase first, examine the terms later. Once they figured out the details, they’d have a nice, chill conversation with Luo Binghe and Mobei-jun about their planned absence. And lastly, use it to return to the real world.

Unfortunately, a *tiny* procedural issue occurred.

And by “tiny,” Shen Qingqiu meant *catastrophic*.

Normally, System-issued items came with a confirmation prompt along the lines of:

[Use Item? Yes / No]

It would only activate when you selected “Yes.”

This time, however, the System decided to skip that formality. The moment they redeemed the gift pack, it was activated automatically.

And that’s how they ended up in this utterly unprepared, completely ridiculous situation.

After a quick round of investigation, Shen Qingqiu—no, *Shen Yuan*—summed up the situation: one piece of extremely good news, and one piece of extremely bad news.

The extremely good news:

Time in the real world flowed much slower than in *Proud Immortal Demon Way.* Several years had passed in the book's world, but here, only a single day.

The extremely bad news:

That probably meant if he stayed here for two days, decades might pass over there…

He didn't even dare imagine what Luo Binghe would do in the meantime.

Still, they were here now, and there was no way to contact that world. Shen Yuan's head throbbed. Worry gnawed at him, but after a deep breath, he steadied himself.

If he couldn't do anything about both worlds, then he'd make sure at least one was secure.

He'd never been the type to lose on both fronts.

He decided to devote himself, fully and completely, to his family. After all, the gift pack was a literal blessing from heaven, as fleeting as it may be.

Who knew if they'd ever get such a chance again?

By sheer luck, "Airplane Shooting Toward the Sky" (his dear colleague, Shang Qinghua) happened to be in the same hospital.

At least they weren't lost to the vast crowd, with no one to conspire with.

The moment Shen Yuan woke up, he wandered out of his VIP ward, took one stroll around the floor, and found Shang Qinghua huddled miserably in a shared four-person room.

Although there was, admittedly, a faint awkwardness between them.

After all, he'd been someone's Shizun for so many years, it had become a reflex to act the part. Without his folding fan, he hardly knew what to do with his hands.

While strolling around the hospital, Shen Yuan happened to walk alongside several elderly patients. He guided them to the pharmacy and engaged in some small talk with them.

As he turned to leave, he overheard one old gentleman, cane in hand, exclaim to his tardy grandson, "That young man—he's extraordinary! You don't often see that kind of presence at his age. He's got depth, real depth!"

Shen Yuan: "....."

Compared with his own minor food-poisoning incident, Shang Qinghua's real-world body had suffered from electrocution, which was far more serious. Which is why his limbs still twitched now and then.

So Shen Yuan ended up dragging him out of the shared ward, upgraded his stay, and after a quick word with the hospital, had another bed moved into his VIP room.

That gave them plenty of time to talk.

Shang Qinghua stared at him in disbelief.

"Cucumber-bro, you're actually a *rich second-gen*? You're not just *good-looking*, you're *rich* too?"

Shen Yuan arched his brow, "Is that really so shocking?"

He hadn't seen his real face in ages, and looking into the mirror again felt oddly nostalgic.

As his sister used to say, his looks were *deceptive*. The room had been filled with his favorite flowers—lilies of the valley (yes, he knew they were poisonous). Their white bells drooped gracefully beside his chair, matching the pale green leaves.

Shen Yuan himself looked much the same: clean, relaxed, and effortlessly refined. Seated with one arm draped over the railing, he was the very picture of an elegant young gentleman.

Anyone seeing him would assume he was a man of leisure, a charming drifter, perhaps even a *party king* (scratch that).

Who would believe that he was actually a *stupid otaku homebody*? Oh, how fraudulent!

Shang Qinghua muttered in daze, “Right… no wonder you throw money around like they grow on trees. And no wonder you look down on *Proud Immortal Demon Way*. For a ’normie’ like you, that kind of brainless wish-fulfillment fiction must be unbearable. But still, if you are rich *and* handsome, why read something like *Proud Immortal Demon Way* at all?”

Shen Yuan had never met anyone who could humble-brag himself into the grave while trying to be modest.

But he couldn’t deny it—he genuinely wanted to know too.

He just couldn’t help himself. Reading that book had always left him in a whiplash state: one moment thinking it was utter trash, the next sensing the author actually had ideas, and then—no, definitely trash again!

Anyway, let’s change the subject.

“So your real name is Xiang Fei?”

Shang Qinghua nodded like a woodpecker.

That was how Shen Yuan had recognized him in the first place. Otherwise, he never would have matched the name to the person. Because, well…

Because “Airplane Shooting Towards the Sky” was nothing like he’d imagined.

Shang Qinghua looked every bit the handsome young man.

But Xiang Fei looked like a quiet, shy, delicate, introverted high-school boy—the kind of kid who'd get cornered by loud, broad-shouldered classmates at the stairwell.

Give him a melancholy profile, a white short-sleeved shirt, gray lighting, and some ambiguous prop, and he could go straight onto the cover of a tragic youth novel.

Shen Yuan had an epiphany.

No wonder Airplane's idea of male beauty was the proud, sharp-featured type like Mobei-jun. Looking like that himself, he'd probably been pushed around plenty. No surprise he idolized the ultimate "big brother among big brothers."

Not that Shen Yuan disliked Mobei-jun, he simply preferred Luo Binghe's "student-council-president-honor-student" vibe.

He seized the chance to ask something that had puzzled him for ages.

"So tell me, your real name's perfectly normal. How on earth did you end up with such a *pervy* pen name?"

Shang Qinghua protested, aggrieved, "You can't blame me, Cucumber-bro! I didn't want that name. I was young and stupid, and didn't care much about privacy. I tried using my real name first, but it was taken."

"Then I went from 'XiangFei1' to 'XiangFei12345,' then 'XiangFei'sFish,' 'XiangFei'sPig,' 'XiangFei'sCow'— through every animal in the zodiac—you name it. At one point I even tried 'WhyIsItSoHardforXiangFeitoPickaName,' but the system said it was too long! In a fit of rage I just chose something no one else would ever use. I swear it was a moment of weakness! Besides, 'Peerless Cucumber' isn't much better, is it?"

Shen Yuan's expression darkened, "Unlike you, mine actually had a reason. My sister was obsessed with a show called *Peerless Crown Princess* and kept chanting the title around the house. Meanwhile, I was binge-reading *Proud Immortal Demon Way* day and night, too lazy to cook, always gnawing

on cucumbers at midnight. The two just…fused in my head. It was kind of a brain rot, simple as that."

Shang Qinghua, missing the point entirely, looked deeply moved by his words.

"So that's it… Cucumber-bro, you cared that much about me!!"

Shen Yuan couldn't stand it. But facing that innocent face, he couldn't bring himself to roast him. With a sharp swish, he yanked the curtain closed again.

The hospital had notified Shen Yuan's family when he woke up.

His parents, long semi-retired after handing the family business to their "unfilial children," immediately picked up his high-school-aged sister from school and rushed to his bedside.

Seeing them standing before him brought a lump to his throat.

After so long in the world of *Proud Immortal Demon Way,* how could he *not* miss his family?

But he knew perfectly well there was nothing he could do about it. Thinking too much would only make it worse. So he never allowed himself a moment to dwell on home—always keeping busy, always rushing about.

His two older brothers weren't there. One was at an Antarctic research base, the other deep in the mountains in search of ancient tea trees. He missed them, but by the time they journeyed their way back, he'd probably be yanked back into the book world again.

They had already flown home once when they'd heard about Shen Yuan's "fatal" food-poisoning coma. Doing it twice would be cruel to their colleagues. So they just sent him photos of his "corpse-like" state as a token of concern.

Deeply moved, Shen Yuan spammed the family group chat with angry, vomiting, and cursing emojis, ‘verbally abused’ them for good measure in exchange for a shower of apologies that came in the form of cash transfer.

As for bringing home a stray patient from the hospital? His family barely blinked.

His sister Shen Tang, gaming on her phone without looking up, muttered, “Classic move. When he was little, he used to bring home abandoned puppies, bathe them in secret, and let them sleep under his blanket. Only to have nightmares with the dog lying on his chest.”

Shang Qinghua was first confused by the phrase “classic move,” then touched that Cucumber-bro loved animals so much. Then, realization hit him.

Wait. So… Am I a stray dog he picked up??

After a full round of examinations confirmed that Shen Yuan was completely recovered, he left the hospital with several large bouquets in his arms.

Naturally, Shang Qinghua also got the deluxe physical exam package courtesy of Shen Yuan, came out unscathed, and prepared to return to his rented apartment.

Before parting, Shen Yuan hesitated, then called out, “Do you want to come stay at my place? It’s not that big, but I can fit one more.”

He knew Airplane lived alone, no family, no one to check on him—and given this man’s track record of nearly dying from electrocution while *eating instant noodles*, what if he (nearly) drops dead again with no one around?

For a moment, Airplane looked tempted, even conflicted.

But then he chuckled, “Cucumber-bro, you really do love me! But your time’s precious. You should spend it with your family. I’ll go home and work.”

Shen Yuan didn’t dignify the “love” comment with a response.

“Alright,” he said simply. “Go work. I’ll find you in a few days.”

Work, of course, meant his most sacred task: eating cup noodles—no, just kidding! He wants to sort through his drafts and write extra chapters for *Proud Immortal Demon Way*!

Shen Yuan had no faith in that whatsoever. Every reader knew how dangerous it was to write sequels or extras for an old, once-popular series. It was pure thankless labor. Readers would just say, “It doesn’t feel the same anymore.”

It wasn’t anyone’s fault though. Even if the author stayed the same, the readers wouldn’t. They’d walked too far down different paths to meet again at some cross point.

In short, Shen Yuan had a bad feeling that Airplane’s next masterpiece would be nothing short of a catastrophe…

Chapter 2: Welcome Home

Shen Yuan didn’t return to the suburban villa where he’d been living before his hospitalization. Instead, he went back to his family’s downtown apartment—a wide, bright space high above the river.

If anyone asked why, well, the answer was simple:

If he suddenly collapsed again, it’d be much easier to rush him straight back to the hospital.

The view from the ninety-fifth floor apartment was spectacular. By day, it was a sweep of glittering river through the cityscape; by night, a sea of twinkling urban lights.

That evening, the whole house was bright with laughter. A restaurant had sent over an entire feast, and the family gathered around to celebrate the third son’s recovery and discharge.

Beneath his genuine delight, Shen Yuan felt a faint stir of melancholy.

He didn’t know how to tell them that in just a few days, he might “fall asleep” again. Nor could he fathom what Luo Binghe must be going through right now.

He had only drifted into thought for a heartbeat when his mother’s voice cut through, full of concern.

“What’s wrong, Lao San? Still feeling unwell?”

(T/N: □□ lǎo sān, literally “Old Three.” A common term of address for the third-born child in a family.)

Shen Yuan forced a laugh, “No, I’m fine. Just… a bit too full.”

Just then, the doorbell rang.

For some reason, Shen Yuan felt something stir within his chest. An inexplicable premonition prickled at the back of his neck.

His younger sister, Shen Tang, hopped up to answer it. Moments later, she came back in, eyes wide.

“Uh… someone’s here for you. A friend.”

A friend?

That was strange. Everyone in his family knew his friends, none of whom would make his sister look that shocked. Could it be—

Shen Yuan moved toward the door. His walk picked up momentum, growing hurried enough that he nearly sent himself stumbling. A steady hand caught him just in time.

He looked up, and met a face of breathtaking beauty.

Luo Binghe gazed down at him, the last traces of panic in his eyes slowly melting into pure relief.

Shen Yuan’s breath hitched. He looked from Luo Binghe to his family, his mind a whirlwind of colliding thoughts.

First: *I need to calm him down, he must be so worried!*

Second: *How the hell am I going to introduce him to my family?*

But loudest of all was the alarm bell ringing in his head.

He suddenly remembered that his current appearance was his real-world body. Different face, different build. Luo Binghe might not even recognize him!

But that concern evaporated almost immediately.

Because Luo Binghe was staring at him with the exact same look he always had in that other world. Even without a word spoken, Shen Yuan knew that he'd been recognized.

Everyone else in the living room looked bewildered, sensing the strange tension.

Shen Yuan reacted fast.

"Uh, hold on, we'll be right back!" With that, Shen Yuan virtually rocketed Luo Binghe into his room and shut the door.

"Shizun," Luo Binghe exhaled softly, the tightness in his chest easing. "I knew it was you."

"How did you even find this place?" Shen Yuan asked.

"Shizun disappeared for several days," Luo Binghe said quietly. "Mobei told me the An Ding Peak Lord was missing as well. We spent some time, and used certain methods. After a few months, we finally traced the location of your souls through your bodies."

He said it in such a calm, light voice.

But Shen Yuan knew those phrases—"some time," "certain methods"—hid countless difficulties and pain.

“Mobei-jun’s here too?”

“He is. He went to find An Ding Peak Lord.”

Shen Yuan could only pray that Airplane doesn’t panic and spill instant noodles onto a live socket again.

“Can you two even get back?” Shen Yuan asked anxiously. It would be a total disaster if he and Airplane can return, but Luo Binghe and Mobei-jun can’t.

Luo Binghe’s tone was relaxed.

“There’s no need to worry. My soul is bound to Shizun’s. When yours return, so will mine. Wherever Shizun is, I will be.”

Only then did Shen Yuan breathe easier. At least there wouldn’t be a tragic case of worlds forever divided.

Still… how? How could the book’s world have intersected with reality itself? He couldn’t figure it out, and it wasn’t the time. There was something else that had him perplexed.

“How did you recognize Shi—-me?” he asked instead.

Now that he is back in his normal routine, saying “Shizun” feels oddly embarrassing.

Luo Binghe smiled.

“I just knew. Even if Shizun took on another form, I’d still recognize you at a glance.”

Shen Yuan drew in a long breath. He needed to explain, somehow, what was happening—but maybe he’d always known, deep down, that this day would come.

“Binghe,” he began calmly, “I know you may have many questions.”

But Luo Binghe looked utterly unconfused. He tilted his head slightly.

“Why would I be, Shizun?”

“You’re… not wondering why I’m here? Or why I look like this?”

Luo Binghe blinked, looking as though Shen Yuan just uttered some strange questions.

“Should I be? Isn’t this your original world, Shizun? And isn’t this… your original self?”

Shen Yuan froze.

The composure on his face cracked.

“You—you knew?”

Luo Binghe smiled, “Of course.”

So he’d known all along—that his Shizun wasn’t from his world, that he was someone else entirely!

“Since when?” Shen Yuan asked in disbelief.

“A long time ago.”

“How long?”

“I confirmed it for certain when the demon clan raided Cang Qiong Mountain, right after Shizun had asked me to fight Elder Tianchui.” Luo Binghe’s voice was calm, almost nostalgic.

Luo Binghe was indeed an unbelievable genius.

That had been years ago and Sheng Yuan could barely remember the name of Elder “Sky Hammer” Tianchui. Luo Binghe had been only fourteen at the time! And he’d already noticed something was off?

“But I first began to suspect in Shuang Hu City,” Luo Binghe continued, “The exact time when Shizun’s soul descended must have happened before then, right?”

He’d even deduced the correct timeframe!

Shen Yuan was stunned, yet Luo Binghe wasn’t finished.

“After that,” he said, “I reviewed everything. I realized Shizun had changed even earlier. Not long before that, Shizun fell ill with a terrible fever, remember? When Shizun recovered, everything about you was different. The changes just didn’t add up. Before that, you’d strike and scold me. After that, you’d save and soothe me. Doesn’t that seem…inconsistent?”

He gazed tentatively at Shen Yuan, as if asking “Am I right?”

After a pause, Shen Yuan sighed softly, “You’re right. That’s… when I arrived.”

Luo Binghe smiled, feeling as though a burden had been lifted from his heart after so long.

“I finally got to hear it from Shizun yourself. So that was our real first meeting.”

For a moment, silence hung between them.

Then Shen Yuan asked, “If you’ve known all this time, why never bring it up?”

Luo Binghe looked puzzled.

“Why would I? It’s such a small thing. If Shizun didn’t tell me, it meant you didn’t want to. And if you didn’t want to, why would I ever force you to speak of it?”

“You think it’s… unimportant?”

“Of course. The only thing that matters is that Shizun came to me—that you’re here. Where you came from doesn’t bother me.”

Shen Yuan couldn’t help it.

“But didn’t it bother you? Didn’t you think maybe I wasn’t really your Shizun?”

Luo Binghe laughed softly.

“What do you mean, Shizun? The one who raised me, who guided me, who taught me everything—it could only have been you. Do you really believe me to be so childish that I could not see that?”

Shen Yuan was speechless, it wasn’t like that. He’d underestimated Luo Binghe by assuming he’d need to sit down for a long emotional talk, maybe even a bit of therapy.

But Luo Binghe had already accepted it all, years ago.

His anxious mind finally calmed down, replaced by a quiet sense of completion and closure.

Then he noticed Luo Binghe staring at him—focused and unwavering.

The intensity was so profound it became almost unbearable, pressing down on Shen Yuan until he felt an urge to escape. He was accustomed to being stared at for his looks since childhood, but no one had ever looked at him with such frankness and unwavering conviction.

Luo Binghe was the first.

Shen Yuan cleared his throat.

“Let’s not just sit around like this. Come on, I’ll take you out to meet my family.”

Luo Binghe’s eyes lit up at once.

“Yes!”

That sudden burst of joy left Shen Yuan momentarily at a loss for words.

He handed Luo Binghe some of his clothes to change into.

When they stepped back into the living room, Shen Yuan immediately heard his mother whispering:

“It’s normal for young people these days to do this. It’s called *cosplay*! Don’t give him that look, you’re being old-fashioned!”

His father protested while pouring tea:

“Old-fashioned? I know about this *play* thing! I was just admiring how well he *plays* the part. What’s wrong with that?”

His sister, eyes on her phone, muttered without looking up,

“Stop arguing. The play’s over. They’re coming out.”

All three turned to stare.

“Got any extra bowls and chopsticks?” Shen Yuan asked casually. “He’s staying for dinner.”

“In the cupboard,” his mother said, pointing.

Shen Yuan dished up a bowl of rice.

His father asked, “Lao San, your friend?”

“Nope,” Shen Yuan corrected. “My disciple. His name’s Luo Binghe.”

Following the script Shen Yuan had drilled into him, Luo Binghe greeted politely—though for some reason, he had voluntarily summoned a charming blush to his cheeks.

“Hello, Uncle, Auntie.”

“Oh, hello, hello!” his mother said brightly. “Come, Xiao Luo! Have a seat!”

His sister squinted.

“Your disciple? Since when? What do you even teach him? Sure he’s not some kid from the school you went to?”

Shen Yuan kept a straight face.

“Gaming. Just a little cultivation-themed combat game. I’m second-in-command of the biggest guild in the game, so I have to train newbies. There’s an in-person event coming up and Binghe’s cos—-ahem, I mean *playing* the game’s final boss. He came over to show me his costume. He’ll be performing a short skit, so we’re rehearsing his lines together. He’ll stay with us for a few days.”

His mother beamed, “I see! Xiao Luo, you’re absolutely *playing* that costume. Good luck with the performance!”

Shen Yuan nearly bit his tongue trying to contain his laugh.

“He does look great, doesn’t he? That’s why we chose him to *play*.”

Luo Binghe seemed to catch the underlying meaning, as his blush deepened.

“Thank you, Auntie, for your kind words. But I am quite ordinary; it is my Shizun whose appearance is truly breathtaking. He is akin to a celestial being.”

Shen Yuan explained placidly to his parents,

“Binghe’s a top student majoring in classical literature. That’s just his way of talking. You’ll get used to it.”

(T/N: Original CN says Binghe majors in Classical Chinese, I adapted it for English)

“Ah, I see,” his parents nodded.

“Very cultured. Not like kids these days.”

The meal went on. Shen Yuan kept one wary eye on his sister, but thankfully, she didn’t suspect anything.

She glanced at Luo Binghe’s long hair for a bit, then slipped off a hair band from her wrist and offered it.

“Here, use this.”

“Thank you,” Luo Binghe accepted it politely and earnestly.

He examined the hair tie, which has a cotton puppy attached. The puppy looked goofy-looking and was even wearing a tiny bib.

Luo Binghe made no comment or show of confusion, but just in case, Shen Yuan reached over.

“I’ll help you.”

Luo Binghe sat obediently, hands on his knees, posture perfectly straight like a well-behaved student awaiting instruction.

As Shen Yuan gathered Luo Binghe’s long hair and tied it up neatly, he made a mental note to take the boy to a salon for a haircut tomorrow.

He took a step back to examine his disciple.

Not bad, he thought. *Cute, even*.

Something about Luo Binghe suited “cute” in an unnervingly natural way. Shen Yuan couldn’t help but laugh.

His sister looked up.

“When did you start playing games? What game? I want to try.”

“Games are a waste of time,” Shen Yuan said solemnly. “Your only job right now is to study hard.”

“Since when did you start sounding like a tired elementary school teacher?” Shen Tang muttered in confusion. “Is it just me?”

“No, no, I feel it too!” Their mother agreed fervently.

“Anyway,” Shen Yuan huffed, “I was studying hard when I was your age.”

“And look how that turned out,” his sister said dryly. “You studied hard, and now you’re still just playing games. So what’s the difference—play now, or play later?”

He surrendered instantly, pressing his palms together in mock salute. She is the undisputed apex predator of their household, indeed.

When he looked up, Luo Binghe was smiling.

What are you laughing at?!

If Shen Yuan had a fan in hand, he would’ve smacked him right then and there. *This insolent disciple!*

Just then, his mother glanced at Luo Binghe and suddenly exclaimed,

“Wait—isn’t that Benben?!”

Luo Binghe blinked, confused. The others turned to look at the little dog on his hair tie.

His father adjusted his glasses, nodding.

“You’re right, it does look like Benben. And that ugly bib too. It’s just like the one Lao San loved putting on him.”

Shen Yuan’s face darkened.

“First of all, the bib wasn’t ugly—it was my best work. Second, of course it looks the same, I had it custom-made according to Benben’s photo.”

“Who’s Benben?” Luo Binghe asked curiously.

His sister happily supplied the tale:

“My brother’s old dog. We weren’t allowed pets, but in sixth grade he secretly brought home one that had been hit by a car. He bandaged it up like a mummy, shared his own meals with it, and let it sleep in his bed. One night it rolled onto his chest and almost suffocated him—”

“Shen Tang,” Shen Yuan interrupted through gritted teeth, “could you not tell that story to literally everyone I ever introduce to you? It’s not even funny.”

“But Shizun,” Luo Binghe said earnestly, “I think it’s a wonderful story. Could Uncle, Auntie, and your sister tell me more about it?”

Shen Yuan: “……”

Chapter 3: The World That Made You

On the third day back in the real world, Shen Yuan was up at the crack of dawn. Time was a luxury he couldn’t afford to waste on sleep.

He’d booked a stylist. It was time to drag Luo Binghe out for a haircut.

Shen Yuan couldn’t help a sigh of admiration. *As expected of the protagonist, his face’s specs are just on another level.*

So many actors could only rock one style, doomed to be either a period drama heartthrob or a modern fashion icon, never both. When your facial features weren’t top-tier, you needed “vibes” to carry you, and your specific flaws usually locked you into one aesthetic.

But Luo Binghe’s face? Flawless from every angle, 360 degrees of pure perfection.

Shen Yuan was half-tempted to shave it all off into a buzz cut, just to see if he’d still be handsome. He managed to restrain the impulse, though. After all, in his books, buzz cuts belonged in the nine circles of aesthetic hell.

A clean, normal short style would do just fine.

He hovered around the stylist, buzzing with unsolicited advice.

“Thin it out a bit here…”

“Make the bangs wispier.”

“Even short hair needs a sense of flow and movement!”

Luo Binghe just sat there, quietly watching Shen Yuan talk and gesture, hanging onto his every word as if it were the most fascinating thing he’d ever heard.

Since Binghe was taller, Shen Yuan’s own clothes fit him awkwardly. So, Shen Yuan dug out some of his older brother’s old college outfits.

Just like that, the dark, intimidating Demon Lord transformed into a white-shirted university student.

It was the simplest, cleanest look, and yet the lethality remained. Binghe slipped one hand into the low-slung pocket—a move he’d mastered without being taught—studied his reflection, and asked thoughtfully,

“Shizun, do you like this appearance?”

Shen Yuan adjusted Luo Binghe’s belt buckle, meticulously rolled up his shirt sleeves to reveal a stretch of pale, strong wrist, and gave him a once-over before replying lightly,

“Not bad.”

Like it? Is he kidding?!

College-student Luo Binghe was drop-dead gorgeous! Was he even allowed to look this good?!

It took less than a day for Luo Binghe to completely and utterly win over Shen Yuan's mother.

By noon, he was politely and efficiently commandeering the kitchen, handling every task himself. His mom just stepped in, took one taste of the food—and immediately launched into praise that could shake the heavens and earth.

"Whoever marries Xiao Luo in the future will be the luckiest person alive!"

Luo Binghe blushed, and replied with humility.

"Thank you, Auntie. Binghe also hopes for that too."

From the living room, Shen Yuan kept glancing back from the news broadcast to the kitchen, utterly bewildered.

What kind of bizarre, inexplicable family dynamic was this forming?!

That evening, Shen Yuan decided to take Luo Binghe out to experience modern society, turning it into a family bonding trip.

The entire Shen family set off, a lively and noisy procession. Shen Yuan had pre-imagined some adorable scenarios.

Maybe Luo Binghe would see something unfamiliar, his eyes wide and uncertain like a timid puppy, too scared to take a step until Shen Yuan smiled and encouraged him.

Then, Shen Yuan could patiently teach him, like guiding a child. After all, once Luo Binghe grew up again, there wouldn't be much left for Shen

Yuan to teach him. He might as well get his fill of being the indulgent Shizun now!

Unfortunately, he soon discovered… he had imagined *way* too much.

That was pure, unadulterated stereotyping! Nothing more!

As expected of the protagonist, Luo Binghe's learning and adaptation skills were downright terrifying.

While Shen Yuan had been sleeping soundly, Luo Binghe had been studying at an inhuman, almost violent pace. By the time Shen Yuan woke up, the curious, wide-eyed Luo Binghe from the night before was gone.

He already understood this world inside and out. Not only had he devoured textbooks from elementary school to university-level, he'd even strong-armed the retired "Dream Demon" Meng Mo into opening a time-dilated space so he could binge-watch the entire Top 250 movie list overnight!!

What kind of insane move was that?! He, Shen Yuan, a native of this world, hadn't even seen half of them!

But while Luo Binghe now understood the modern world, his perspective on it was… different.

Shen Yuan realized there was a fundamental misunderstanding. Someone from a magical Xianxia world might not actually be all that impressed.

Airplanes?

Pfft. Spirit beasts can fly. Sword flight is a thing. What's so special about a plane? Do people think they didn't have large-scale sword flight formations?

Television?

None of that “Ah! People are moving inside the colored box! How amazing!” nonsense. They have scrying mirrors in his world—they can see anything they want. And it’s all *real*!

Any moderately powerful cultivator can just say, “I want to watch a ghost-head spider lay eggs,” and the mirror will show it to them in all its horrifying, graphic detail.

The internet?

Why waste time arguing with strangers on a screen? If you have a problem with someone, you just fly over and challenge them to a face-to-face duel! Far more straightforward and satisfying!

Shen Yuan felt like he’d lost a major source of joy.

Even watching movies seemed pointless for Luo Binghe.

The big screen was, at its core, just a cheap substitute for witnessing grand spectacles and wonders firsthand. But Luo Binghe came from a world where you could literally fly up and see those spectacles.

Want to witness a wonder? Luo Binghe could just create one on the spot.

And, to be fair, the movie itself was terrible.

How did it manage to have a plot even worse than something Airplane Shooting Towards the Sky would write?!

As wave after wave of overblown, flashy CGI washed over the screen, Shen Yuan sneaked a glance at Luo Binghe beside him. His expression was blank, as if he were silently questioning the fundamental purpose of this entire activity.

A bunch of people sitting in a dark room, getting emotional over moving pictures... why?

Only when Shen Yuan looked over, their eyes meeting, did his gaze soften slightly.

The one comforting thought was that… at least Luo Binghe seemed to like the popcorn. Shen Yuan's sense of accomplishment in "providing for him" was, at the very least, satisfied.

After the movie, the family strolled along the riverbank.

Shen Yuan was chatting with his parents, offering a scathing critique of the film, when he turned and noticed Luo Binghe a few steps behind. He was watching their noisy, laughing group with a faint, unreadable smile.

Shen Yuan slowed his pace to fall into step beside him.

"Judging by your reaction," Shen Yuan said, "you didn't find today very fun, did you?"

Luo Binghe tilted his head. "Does it matter to Shizun, whether I find this world interesting or not?"

Did it? Maybe a little.

It wasn't about wounded pride or some misplaced sense of superiority—Shen Yuan wasn't like that.

After a moment's thought, he sighed softly. "You're only here by a stroke of chance. Of course I wanted to show you something interesting."

Otherwise… he'd feel like a bit of a failure as a teacher.

Luo Binghe looked down with a faint smile. "Perhaps there isn't much here that's truly fascinating… but this is the world that gave birth to Shizun's soul, isn't it?"

Shen Yuan's steps faltered.

Luo Binghe looked at him, the reflections of the river lights shimmering in his eyes, along with Shen Yuan's own silhouette. "For that reason alone," he said quietly, "it is extraordinary."

Shen Yuan was momentarily at a loss for words.

"Just for that," Luo Binghe added, his voice soft, "I want to understand it more."

"So, Shizun, you needn't worry about whether I find its novelties amusing."

It wasn't about finding the world interesting because of its contents. It was about finding the world worthy because a certain person existed within it.

The world was blessed from the very start because of that.

Shen Yuan blinked, then coughed lightly. "Alright, alright. I get it."

After a brief struggle, he added, "...But next time, maybe don't study quite so hard. Leave your Shizun a little room to actually teach, will you?"

A student who learns too independently is bad for the teacher's ego!

Luo Binghe smiled and nodded. "Understood, Shizun."

Just as Shen Yuan was about to give a modest, approving nod, he heard a sharp *crunch* from behind.

Turning, he found his little sister standing there, having just finished her soda, straw in mouth, watching them.

Luo Binghe remained perfectly composed, but Shen Yuan sensed trouble from her expression.

"What are you staring at?" he asked warily.

She slurped up the last drops, crushed the can under her foot, tossed it into a bin, and shoved her hands in her pockets as if pondering the profound mysteries of the universe.

Finally, she said in a low, solemn voice, “Don’t worry. I’ll keep your secret.”

She sighed. “Honestly, I always knew you were destined to die alone… I just didn’t expect it would turn out like *this*.”

Hey! Don’t curse your own brother like that!

And what did she mean, “always knew”?! He wasn’t that hopelessly reclusive! He was only *half* a shut-in! Half! By all reasonable standards, he was a functioning member of society.

Chapter 4: Proud Immortal

Day Four. Shen Yuan finally heard from Shang Qinghua.

His phone lit up with a frantic stream of messages from someone with an airplane as their profile picture.

> Airplane: BRO. Do you have any idea what’s happening?! This is TERRIFYING!
>
> Airplane: HE FOUND ME! He crawled out of my computer like the girl from *The Ring*! I almost had a heart attack! My brand-new laptop!! My instant noodles!!!
>
> Airplane: I’m talking about Mobei-jun.
>
> Airplane: He said Luo Binghe is here too! Is it true? Are you still breathing over there?!

Shen Yuan’s eye twitched. *Crawling out of the computer…* Okay, Luo Binghe’s entrance was normal by comparison. Not that he knew where his disciple had originally popped out from—for all he knew, it could have been even more horrifying.

Airplane: It’s the end of the world. I’m calling it. [screaming internally.jpg]

Airplane: How are they even *here*? Does this… does this mean I’m actually the Creator God?? I can’t handle this kind of pressure!

Shen Yuan felt a powerful urge to yank a curtain shut on this conversation. Finding no curtain, he did the next best thing: he blocked Shang Qinghua.

A minute later, he unblocked him.

Airplane, blissfully unaware of the brief digital exile, continued:

Airplane: He asked me why I ran! He looked so betrayed, I think he was on the verge of tears! It was terrifying! What was I supposed to say? ‘My Lord, it was an accident, I swear!’

Airplane: I had to sweet-talk him for an hour before he calmed down! He’s so high-maintenance!

Airplane: I’m more exhausted than when I pulled all-nighters writing 18,000-word daily updates. I feel like I’ve been run over. This is the first chance I’ve had to message you. Just you wait, I’m gonna have him ask Luo Binghe to borrow the Dream Demon’s power. I need a time-dilated black room in my dreams. The new *Proud Immortal Demon Way* isn’t going to write itself!

Shen Yuan: Please tell me he hasn’t found your manuscript.

Airplane: Don’t worry! I’ve got it locked down tight. Mobei-jun’s a man of his word. If he promises not to look, he won’t.

Airplane: It’s just… I tried to take him out to see the sights, but he was bored by everything. Ugh, my messages keep failing to send… the signal’s probably crap up here…

The last sentence caught Shen Yuan’s attention.

Shen Yuan: Where are you right now?

Shang Qinghua sent a selfie. One glance and Shen Yuan felt dizzy. He was pretty sure these two had just accidentally broken a world record.

Shen Yuan rubbed his temples in disbelief.

> Shen Yuan: What mountain did you even climb?
>
> Airplane: I DON’T KNOW! I took him to the amusement park! I thought, hey, pirate ship, Ferris wheel, classic fun! Called it a good night, but I woke up and he’d moved us HERE! Bro, I’m scared!!!

Shen Yuan didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. It was a complete mess, but at least someone was keeping Airplane-bro company. Beats being alone in a tiny apartment with just your keyboard and instant noodles for comfort.

He thought for a moment and typed out an analysis of the situation.

> Shen Yuan: He probably thinks you enjoy this kind of thrill ride. He was trying to show you that any excitement you want, he can provide right there beside you.
>
> ……
>
> Shen Yuan: Hello?
>
> Shen Yuan: You alive?
>
> Shen Yuan: …Right. Next time, skip the amusement park. Try somewhere… normal.

Not that an amusement park *wasn’t* normal.

Airplane-bro was presumably still among the living.

Because shortly after, earth-shattering news broke.

Zhongdian Literature's most controversial hit, the legendary *Proud Immortal Demon Way*, had just dropped 180,000 words of new bonus chapters.

One hundred and eighty thousand words.

Airplane's typing speed remained truly terrifying.

The new *Proud Immortal Demon Way* was clearly ready to run for another ten million words.

But the forums were in absolute chaos.

The most shocking part, according to reader reports, was that Airplane Shooting Towards the Sky—infamous for his trashy, no-shame wish-fulfillment writing—was suddenly writing a serious story.

The new content had completely ditched the brainless, dragged-out style. Character fates were altered: the "scum villain" Shen Qingqiu, for instance, seemed to have a completely different personality. Characters who died early, like Bai Zhan Peaks Lord Liu Qingge, were now alive. New characters, like Luo Binghe's parents, had been introduced.

This… was a whole new *Proud Immortal Demon Way,* set in a parallel world!

Readers were flooding the forums, passionately debating the new plot and characters, while others were at each other's throats over whether the story was now trash, if the characters were out-of-character, if Airplane had lost his touch, or finally found it.

A glimpse at the most popular discussion posts:

> *OMG, did Airplane just pivot to BROMANCE?! (3.9k replies)*
>
> *So disappointed. What is this crap? (206 replies)*
>
> *Battle of the Century: Luo Binghe vs. Tianlang-Jun. Who's the TRUE Heavenly Demon? (1.2k replies)*

It’s just not the same. Let the old story stay pure in my memory… (619 replies)

Unpopular opinion: I like that he dropped the harem. (781 replies)

I PAID for a harem! Where’s my harem?! REFUND! (111 replies)

POLL: Who’s the top beauty? Liu Mingyan or Sha Hualing? (888 replies)

The Ultimate Showdown: Could Yue Qingyuan beat Liu Qingge without Xuan Su’s HP drain debuff? (961 replies)

This is peak! I never knew PIDW had such deep lore! We Heavenly Demons were born to conquer! (442 replies)

The MC is BUTCHERED. This isn’t Luo Binghe. TRASH. (339 replies)

Excuse me?

The moment Shen Yuan saw that last title, his fighting spirit ignited. White-hot fury surged through him.

How dare they! Criticize the plot all you want, but who gave you permission to slander the protagonist?!

He recovered his password at lightning speed and logged into the legendary forum account known across the *Proud Immortal Demon Way* discussion boards—the former “Elite,” now “Legendary” reader, whose points and tipping history dwarfed all others: **Peerless Cucumber**.

He cracked his knuckles, positioned his keyboard, and lined up three phones beside him, all comment sections opened and ready.

The war had begun. General Peerless Cucumber was reporting for duty.

---

1. [Retired Old Grandpa]
Who is this guy? His forum level is insane.

2. [Qingge’s #1 Fan]

It’s Cucumber-bro! You don’t know him? You must be new here!

3. [Bai Zhan Peak Enthusiast]
What’s it to you? Not everyone followed the serialization, you know!

4. [Cang Qiong Stairway Sweeper]
Long time no see, Cucumber-bro! Since when did you become an Airplane defender? Weren’t you his biggest hater? (P.S. @Bai Zhan Peak Enthusiast, chill out.)

5. [Liu Mingyan the Beauty]
He’s always been a fan. He just loves Luo Binghe that much.

6. [Ling’er’s Bell]
Why’s this fandom so toxic? I’m just here for my girl Sha Hualing. @Airplane, write a Sha Hualing side story and I’ll forgive you! I want her to step on me!!

7. [Off with SQQ’s Balls]
He just loves Luo Binghe +1

8. [Bring Back the Old Glory]
Honestly, Cucumber-bro has a point. This isn’t a new direction. It’s a return to form. Airplane’s early writing was actually like this—more nuanced. He wasn’t writing power fantasy, so no one read them. Although he did get popular later on, he also flushed his dignity down the drain… Nostalgic, but it tracks. This feels just like the old Airplane. And can we just appreciate Cucumber-bro’s glow-up? Man’s gone from hater to believer. He’s quoting deep cuts from Airplane’s back catalogue—certified fan status achieved.

9. [Just a Bypasser]
No shade, but I’m amazed such dedicated PIDW fans exist. Peerless Cucumber is a legend. I certainly won’t be forgetting his name any time soon.

10. [Peerless Cucumber (Legendary)]
You can waste time gathering your little downvote brigade, or you can face me yourself. Can’t even be a proper keyboard warrior? Then at least mop up after them.

11. [Ten Years a Reader (OP)]
This trash fire is trending again. Same old crap. Don’t tell me you can’t see the blatant queer-baiting? Then again, stans will eat up anything.

12. [An Ding Admissions Office]
He just loves Luo Binghe +2. We're with you, Cucumber-bro!

……

777. [Ten Years a Reader (OP)]
This comment has been removed for violating community guidelines.

……

1314. [Qing Jing Peak Education: Your Peace of Mind]
He just loves Luo Binghe +999.

Chapter 5: Chaos and Clarity

Peerless Cucumber reigned supreme. His whirlwind of devastating wit left the forum in ruins, leaving a trail of flawless victory in his wake.

But as the saying goes, pride goes before a fall. He soon discovered that extreme joy begets sorrow.

Luo Binghe had finally found something that piqued his interest—and that was none other than *Proud Immortal Demon Way*.

It felt like the floor of his world had just given way.

The moment Shen Yuan realized what Luo Binghe was reading, a wave of sheer helplessness washed over him.

He never could have predicted that Luo Binghe's insane thirst for knowledge would extend to this. He's binge-reading web novels!

Cold sweat dripped down Shen Yuan's temples at the thought.

Luo Binghe suddenly chuckled. "Shizun, come look at what I've found!"

Shen Yuan walked over, his mind racing. He made a split-second decision. He looked at the text with feigned surprise and asked, “What is this?”

“This book is... peculiar,” Luo Binghe said. “Shizun, you’ve never read it?”

“Never. How strange,” Shen Yuan replied, the picture of innocence.

Yeah, right. He knew *exactly* what it was and wasn’t about to admit a thing. Because admitting it could trigger one of the following nightmare scenarios:

Scenario #1: Luo Binghe looking utterly shattered, the foundation of his world crumbling as he whispered, “So I’m just a character in a book? None of this is real?”

Scenario #2: Luo Binghe’s gaze igniting, crimson and accusing, as he demanded, “So, in Shizun’s eyes, am I just a fictional role, not a real person?”

It was a fatal trap. Shen Yuan’s head throbbed just thinking about it.

For #1, he had no idea how to handle that kind of existential crisis. He had no experience or confidence in mending a shattered worldview.

For #2, he absolutely refused to create such an unnecessary misunderstanding over a pointless truth.

But none of the scenarios he dreaded came to pass. Luo Binghe’s attitude was calm, showing no surprise, let alone a trace of despair or sign of breaking down.

The one feeling despair was Shen Yuan himself. Because he realized Luo Binghe hadn’t just finished the novel—he had clicked open the book reviews.

Shen Yuan’s soul nearly left his body.

Oh, hell. What is he doing reading the posts by Peerless Cucumber?!

“This person is rather interesting,” Luo Binghe remarked.

No. He’s not. He’s not interesting at all!

“Shizun,” Luo Binghe continued, “I feel there’s important information hidden within this book. Shall we meet with Mobei-jun and the An Ding Peak Lord today to discuss it?”

Shen Yuan knew this was inevitable.

“...Sure,” he agreed reluctantly.

Shen Yuan immediately messaged Shang Qinghua. The two quickly aligned their stories, determined to keep their identities secret.

Shang Qinghua was terrified that his “son” (yes, he considered himself Luo Binghe’s father!) would despise him. Especially when Shang Qinghua had written him as a legendary playboy scumbag and filled the plot with trashy, reader-serving nonsense.

As for Shen Yuan? His reason was even more obvious.

He felt that if Luo Binghe ever witnessed the glorious spectacle of him single-handedly taking on the entire forum of *PIDW*, he would never be able to face his disciple as a teacher ever again...

With Shen Yuan’s agreement, Luo Binghe smiled. “Then, Shizun, let’s depart for Mobei-jun and the An Ding Peak Lord’s estate?”

Shen Yuan chose his words with care. “Would that be… appropriate? I believe they’re currently staying at your shishu’s place. I’m not sure his… *residence...* is meant for hosting large gatherings.”

Calling Shang Qinghua’s rented room an “estate” felt like an insult to the word itself.

Luo Binghe, however, looked genuinely puzzled. “Is that so? Mobei-jun has voiced no such concerns.”

What? Since when did an esteemed Demon Lord—the kind one might imagine awakening in a palace of jade and obsidian—find a tiny, fluorescent-lit rental apartment… unobjectionable?

Now Shen Yuan was curious. He had to see for himself how these two were managing their living situation. But when they prepared to leave, the sight that greeted him was nothing short of astounding.

Shen Yuan had intended to call his family driver, but Luo Binghe stopped him, saying it wouldn't be necessary. They took the elevator down, and as the doors opened, a sleek SUV stood waiting by the building's shimmering fountain.

Its body was mirror-smooth, reflecting the light in shifting, painterly patterns. The chrome grille resembled an intricately crafted silver mask, and the streamlined body was both elegant and sharp-edged.

Luo Binghe stood beside the vehicle, casually tossing the key in his hand. Dangling from the keychain was that familiar goofy cotton puppy in a tiny bib.

Hold on—where did this SUV come from? And the driver? Just what has he been doing in this world…?

Seeing Shen Yuan's questioning look, Luo Binghe smiled gently.

"Shizun, there's no need to be so alarmed. I promise I haven't done anything this world would consider improper. I simply believe that no matter where we are, I must be capable of protecting you. So I've made some... modest arrangements."

Hearing this reassurance, Shen Yuan felt somewhat relieved. Truth be told, Luo Binghe had been quite well-behaved lately and probably wouldn't do anything too extreme. But then another thought struck him—wait, Luo Binghe spent every night at his place. When exactly did he find time to make these "modest arrangements"?

How is he finding the time?

How did he even manage to teach himself to drive like a pro?

Thanks to Luo Binghe’s warning, Shen Yuan wasn’t the least bit surprised when the SUV pulled up in front of a three-story villa.

The villa’s owner appeared to be absent. But soon enough, Mobei-jun arrived—though Shen Yuan never expected quite this kind of entrance.

A black sedan stopped at the gates, a bodyguard respectfully opening the rear door. Out stepped Mobei-jun—his expression cold and aloof behind sunglasses, his suit impeccably tailored. Trailing nervously behind him was a pitiful, terrified, and utterly helpless-looking Shang Qinghua.

What a classic dramatic entrance. Shen Yuan couldn’t help but feel Airplane-bro must have shown Mobei-jun way too many questionable entertainment productions!

He really wanted to ask: *Where did you get this car? And the bodyguard?... Ah, never mind the car, better ask about this villa first... Actually, forget it...*

Just what is with this whole mafia young master act?!

The scene was simply too blinding to look at directly. The formerly decently-tall and reasonably-presentable Shang Qinghua now looked like an innocent high school student standing next to a domineering CEO. His slender frame appeared especially pitiful and vulnerable, inevitably making people imagine all sorts of shocking scenarios!

Shen Yuan glanced toward Shang Qinghua.

Shang Qinghua wore an expression of pure terror, his eyes silently screaming: *“Don’t look at me, Cucumber-bro! This all started when he said my place was too small and my bed was too cramped! Anyway, he claims he didn’t do anything like murder or arson to acquire all this... but as for the specific methods? I don’t dare ask, and I really, really don’t want to know!”*

Inside the villa.

Luo Binghe tossed a physical copy of *Proud Immortal Demon Way* onto the table between the four of them.

And so, the four of them began their... research session on the novel.

Shang Qinghua spoke first. “To think such a thing exists! What a remarkable book!—But, theoretically speaking, wouldn’t the author of this book be the Creator God? Wouldn’t that make him Mobei-jun’s father?”

Shen Yuan was speechless. He had never met anyone with such a powerful *dad complex*.

He was so desperate to reclaim his paternal dignity, yet he had none to speak of. He didn’t even dare voice Luo Binghe as his son. He was just testing how far Mobei-jun’s newfound tolerance would stretch.

As expected, Mobei-jun barely glanced at Shang Qinghua, completely indifferent to the suggestion. Shang Qinghua visibly deflated.

Of course. Shen Yuan thought. *Mobei-jun barely acknowledged his real father. Why would he care about some random author?*

It seemed Shang Qinghua’s dream of hearing someone call him “Dad” was doomed. Being a Shizun was clearly the more stable career path—a teacher was for life, but a father was just a suggestion. How tragic!

“Creator God? Impossible,” Luo Binghe cut in dismissively. “The author merely possessed some psychic sensitivity, allowing him to glimpse echoes of another world.”

Shen Yuan understood immediately. “That's one way to look at it,” he said thoughtfully.

It made sense—some people were naturally attuned to other dimensions, catching fragments of reality like radio signals. Perhaps Xiang Fei had subconsciously picked up pieces of their world and woven them into his narrative.

This would explain how they could cross between worlds. They had to exist on the same plane. No wonder Luo Binghe wasn't having an existential crisis.

But this completely overturned Shen Yuan and Shang Qinghua's long-held understanding of *Proud Immortal Demon Way*.

It wasn't just a book—it was a window to another reality.

Still, many questions remained. There were now three known worlds:

1. The modern, real world
2. The original *PIDW* world
3. The revised "transmigration" world

Clearly, they all existed on the same level. So what was the relationship between the original and transmigration worlds? How was the transmigration world created? Where did the System come from, and what was its purpose?

They could no longer blame this on "an author's grudge after being forced to change his plot." Airplane was just a mortal—he couldn't possibly have this kind of power.

Luo Binghe was literally at the pinnacle of a fantasy cultivation world. If even *he* couldn't explain the System, what did that make it?

Shen Yuan hesitated, wanting to discuss this further but terrified of exposing himself. "Will you try to find the author?" he ventured.

Fortunately, Luo Binghe shook his head. "It's unnecessary. His sensitivity to the other world seems limited. He may likely be as confused as anyone. There's no insight to gain from him."

"Oh? How so?"

"The narrative of *Proud Immortal Demon Way* is wildly inaccurate," Luo Binghe stated coldly. "The characters are hollow, the logic is nonsensical, and the prose so unbearably bloated. It was an extremely unpleasant read."

Got it, Shen Yuan thought*. You think it's badly written and out of character.*

Luo Binghe's frown deepened. "I've always treated Ning-shijie and Liu-shimei with nothing but respect. The book's suggestion of romantic entanglements is pure fabrication. Parts like the conquering of the hundred flower spirits read like fever dreams. This work is profoundly vulgar."

Well, I think its scale probably can't compare to the stuff Sleeping Willow's Flower and the others wrote... But you're right. Whenever Airplane wrote about women, he completely lost touch with reality. He's not even as good as Sleeping Willow's Flower!

The corner of Shang Qinghua's mouth twitched. *I was just giving readers what they wanted!! Just trying to make a living...*

Shen Yuan shot him a look, as if saying: *Shut up, you spineless author.*

Mobei-jun, who'd been silently reading his copy of *PIDW* without even removing his sunglasses, spoke up flatly: "Why is the 'Braving the Hundred Flowers' chapter so much longer than the others?"

Shen Yuan almost laughed. *Heh, I know this one. That's where he padded the word count by having the protagonist 'conquer' over a hundred flower spirits. That was three or four thousand words of purple prose per maiden, of course it would be much longer.*

After a moment of silence, Luo Binghe said expressionlessly, "The flower spirits remain their larval or insect forms for life. They find human shapes repulsive and view humans with contempt. The notion of romantic involvement is biologically impossible."

Shen Yuan: "....."

That's... certainly a piece of knowledge unbeknown to most. Airplane... I have no words. Core worldbuilding doesn't just change, right? So it must be your own improvisation! Insect anthropomorphism? That's way too hardcore! What kind of mind-shattering stuff did you make Luo Binghe read?!

Mobei-jun deadpanned, “Perhaps it was a fetish. Perhaps he enjoyed the idea of being swarmed by bugs.”

Shang Qinghua: “……”

Trembling like a frightened hamster, he scrambled over to Mobei-jun. “My Lord, it’s not all bad, right?” he pleaded. “The parts about you are at least... tolerable… right?”

Mobei-jun looked down at him. “Are you a fan of this book?”

Shang Qinghua glanced fearfully at Luo Binghe, who showed no reaction.

Shen Yuan decided to throw him a bone. “What if he is? There’s no crime in appreciating a story!”

Gritting his teeth, Shang Qinghua confessed, “Yes! I’m a fan! A die-hard, original, ten-year veteran fan!”

Mobei-jun thought about it. “It’s... acceptable.”

Shang Qinghua looked as if he’d been granted amnesty. *Thank god.*

To be honest, if you just looked at Mobei-jun’s parts, they were indeed... acceptable.

Mobei-jun’s subplot was relatively palatable. Airplane had handled his character with a lighter touch. Never mind who was modeled after whom, but Mobei-jun was, among all the characters, the least OOC. Although there were still plenty of questionable creative choices...

This finally broke Shen Yuan’s patience. He grabbed his phone and fired off a text:

> *Shen Yuan: You outrageous biased author! How dare you load the protagonist with every trashy trope while going easy on your favorite side character!*

Shang Qinghua, sitting across from him, also frantically typed on his phone:

> *Shang Qinghua: The protagonist bears the heaviest burden! The comments demanded it! The peer pressure was immense! I was weak, I admit it...*

Luo Binghe delivered his final verdict. “What truly confounds me isn’t the author, but his audience. The author seems to have sacrificed any authentic voice in pursuit of popular appeal. He wasn’t writing a story he believed in—he was writing what he thought would sell.”

Shen Yuan: *I... I wasn’t a fan of those parts... I hated them too... I’m... Ugh. It’s no use. I’m forever tainted!*

Shen Yuan and Shang Qinghua shared a silent look, then averted their eyes, clinging to their secret identities.

As the discussion neared its end, Shen Yuan noticed Airplane had gone quiet, seemingly lost in thought. This was quite unlike his usual self.

“What’s wrong?” Shen Yuan asked. “What’s on your mind?”

Airplane looked up, unusually serious. “I was thinking...What if our world is a story too?”

“Don’t fall into rabbit holes like that,” Shen Yuan said flatly.

“How can you…”

“Whether this is a story or not is irrelevant,” Shen Yuan declared. “Would it change how you live? Our meaning isn’t given to us—we create it. *We* are the meaning. Next topic.”

Shang Qinghua blinked, impressed. “Cucumb... Shen-bro, I didn’t know you were an existentialist!”

“I’m not,” Shen Yuan retorted. “I’m more surprised that *you* know about existentialism.”

Even though it wasn’t some profound concept, given the level of language proficiency exposed in Airplane-bro’s writing, Shen Yuan hadn’t expected any philosophical literacy from him.

Shang Qinghua smiled awkwardly. “Hey, don’t look down on me like that! I did graduate from a top-tier university, you know. We are fellow alumni you know…”

“*Really?*” Shen Yuan was shocked. “You went to *my* school? Then how is your brain so full of Chinglish and bad grammar?”

Their alma mater was notoriously selective.

“Well, I went into creative work after graduation! English is like advanced math—80% of people never use it again after learning it, so of course they forget. The peak of my English proficiency was during the college entrance exams…”

There was another thought Shen Yuan kept to himself: Shang Qinghua’s idea was viscerally terrifying. It short-circuited his brain.

The mere notion that some unseen audience might have been watching his entire life—every last bit of his tangled drama with Luo Binghe, their endless push-and-pull... He couldn't bear to dwell on it. How horrifying!

Thankfully, he was reasonably sure no one would be interested in reading *that* particular story.

…Right?

(T/N: lmfao mxtx is definitely talking about us scummies)

That evening, after returning home, Shen Yuan and Luo Binghe had dinner with his parents and sister. They took a short walk after dinner and then retreated to their room.

The moment the door closed, Luo Binghe posed a question that caught Shen Yuan completely off guard.

He tilted his head and asked, “Shizun, do you know what a ‘System’ is?”

Not bad. He’s even started reading System novels now. Just how many pounds of web novels has he devoured?

“I know,” Shen Yuan replied. “Why do you ask?”

He’s not going to ask me for recommendations, is he?

Luo Binghe said, “I’ve been thinking—the ‘System’ in this world is essentially the same as a ‘Parasitic Spirit’ in our world. What does Shizun think?”

Parasitic Spirits—entities like the now-retired Dream Demon, also friendly nicknamed “Portable Grandfather.”

Now that he mentioned it, the System and a “Portable Grandfather” were indeed similar. Both required the host to complete certain tasks in return for rewards. The main difference was that the Dream Demon was a living entity, while the System was like an artificial intelligence.

“That’s a reasonable comparison,” Shen Yuan said, intrigued.

But his interest was short-lived.

Because Luo Binghe smiled and asked, “Shizun, do you have a System?”

“……”

As expected of the protagonist from another world. His intelligence stats are maxed out!

Yes. Even though the original PIDW is no longer the same PIDW at its core, the protagonist is still the protagonist!

It wasn’t just out of habit that Shen Yuan thought of Luo Binghe that way. When one becomes a being of peerless supremacy, it follows that he becomes the protagonist of that world.

After rapidly weighing the pros and cons, Shen Yuan chose to tell the truth this time.

“Yes,” he stated plainly.

“As I thought.” Luo Binghe nodded. “Shizun’s body in this world has no spiritual power. Therefore, only a Parasitic Spirit could transport Shizun’s soul between the two worlds.”

Then, Luo Binghe took a deep breath and knelt before him.

Although Shen Yuan was used to him kneeling, seeing the “university student” version of Luo Binghe on his knees was particularly jarring. He had been sitting on the bed but now shot to his feet, startled. “What are you doing?”

Luo Binghe’s gaze was heavy. “So…back then... Shizun pushed me into the Endless Abyss because the System forced you to. Is that right?”

“……”

Shen Yuan let out a soft sigh. “Yes.”

A complex mix of emotions flickered in Luo Binghe’s eyes—something like relief, but also a hidden pain.

“I see,” he said.

Then, he suddenly slapped himself across the face.

The blow was swift and vicious, startling Shen Yuan, who grabbed his hand in a panic. “What are you doing?!”

Kneeling on the ground, Luo Binghe looked up at him. “Shizun was forced into an impossible position, yet I... in the Endless Abyss... I truly held a shred of resentment towards you. And later, I... I frightened you.”

Shen Yuan couldn’t deny that. It *was* terrifying.

But! Shen Yuan couldn’t stand to see Luo Binghe like this. “That’s no reason to hit anyone!”" he said, furious. “How can you hit someone I raised?!”

“It was my fault,” Luo Binghe insisted. “Please punish me, Shizun.”

Shen Yuan was at a loss. How could he punish him? He could not bear to raise his hand at Luo Binghe.

Seeing his helplessness, Luo Binghe bowed his head and buried his face in Shen Yuan’s knees, his expression hidden.

“A shred of resentment is very little,” Shen Yuan said softly. “I don’t mind.”

“But Shizun never had even a shred of ill will toward me,” Luo Binghe whispered. “Why should you have to bear the weight of my shred of resentment?”

But Shen Yuan, recalling their first reunion after Luo Binghe climbed out of the Endless Abyss—though he’d been terrified at the time, now remembered the look in Luo Binghe’s eyes hadn’t been one of hatred, but of heartbreak.

He knew this disciple better than anyone. The “shred” Luo Binghe spoke of probably amounted nothing more than a moment of weakness—perhaps getting so enraged and pained that he might sketch a tiny picture of Shen Qingqiu on a scrap of cloth with his own blood, stare at it for a long time, and then... eat it.

“Come on,” Shen Yuan said gently. “Back on your feet.”

Only then did Luo Binghe silently rise. Shen Yuan motioned for him to sit beside him on the bed.

They sat in silence for a while. Then, Shen Yuan fetched the small first-aid kit by the bedside and turned Luo Binghe’s face to the side.

Luo Binghe obediently complied. Shen Yuan carefully applied ointment to his cheek, his heart aching. *He hit himself so hard... half his face is swollen!*

But it was so unreal. How could someone still look so devastatingly handsome even with a bruised and swollen face?

After a long silence, Luo Binghe finally spoke, “Shizun’s Parasitic Spirit is too powerful. Not only can it move Shizun between worlds, but its presence is also undetectable, even to me. Shizun, we must find a way to remove it.”

In truth, Shen Yuan didn’t feel particularly threatened by it anymore. Since the main quest ended, the System had become passive. When it did show up, it was usually to deliver gift packs.

It felt more like a pet now. It remained quiet even at Luo Binghe’s declaration to remove its existence.

But it was, after all, an entity of unknown origin, and there was no guarantee it would never harm Shen Yuan. Luo Binghe’s concern was reasonable.

“We’ll look into it together," Shen Yuan agreed. “Perhaps we can try to trace its origins.”

Only then did Luo Binghe seem to relax slightly. It was clear he would have accepted Shen Yuan’s refusal if he didn’t want to remove the system, but the worry would have gnawed at him.

He seemed thoughtful. “Still... regardless of its origin, I must confess a part of me is grateful. If not for it, Shizun would never have come to my world. And if not for it, Shizun would never have pushed me into the Endless Abyss.”

Shen Yuan was taken aback.

“Why would you be grateful... for that?”

Luo Binghe let out a soft laugh.

Half of his body was cast in shadow as he looked at Shen Yuan, his gaze deep and dark. He spoke, word by word:

“Because only an act like that would be enough to make someone as kind as Shizun remember me — for the rest of your life.”

Chapter 6: The Origin Chapter

Deep in the night, something resurfaced in Shen Yuan’s hazy mind.

Back when Luo Binghe fell into the Endless Abyss, the System had gone offline too, leaving only an automated reply. It seemed to have said that Luo Binghe was its primary power source!

Maybe he should tell Luo Binghe this and see what he thinks.

When Shen Yuan sat up, he realized Luo Binghe wasn’t beside him.

He’s probably out exploring the world again. Understandable—kids were always extra curious about new places.

Suddenly, Shen Yuan heard a familiar chime. The System is back online.

> *System: The following is a message from all Systems. We sincerely request the Host to communicate with Primary Power Source Luo Binghe. Please do not uninstall this product. Please do not sever the System’s connection to the current holder of the account “Shen Qingqiu.” [on my knees crying.gif]*

Shen Yuan—that is, Shen Qingqiu—could hardly look at this thing that had once stressed him out so much.

Since Luo Binghe is the primary power source, if he decided to pull the plug, the System can’t fight back. Is it... here to ask for a favor?

Shen Qingqiu asked tentatively, “If I help you, what’s in it for me?”

System: Should the Host provide assistance, the System will reward a “Declassification Dossier,” containing insider intel on the System’s origin!

Really?

Shen Qingqiu waved a hand. “Approved. Hand it over!”

All he’d promised was to talk to Luo Binghe. The outcome wasn’t guaranteed. You know, communication could always fail!

However…

The bar to read his “Declassification Dossier” is absurdly high!

Shen Qingqiu found himself pulled into a separate space. Staring at the mountains of scrolls piled around him, his face darkened. “How many words are in here?”

System: 921 million.

Nine hundred *million* words. Over *nine hundred million* words!! That’s not even humanly possible to read!

Proud Immortal Demon Way was less than 20 million words, and reading that had nearly killed him. And this is 921 million? He’d lose his mind before learning any insider intel!

System: Would you like to spend 100,000 Satisfaction Points and 100 Integrity Points to enable Easy Mode? [Yes/No]

Easy mode — How nostalgic!

Shen Qingqiu’s motto was: pay-to-win, never grind. He clicked “Yes” without any hesitation.

Instantly, the mountains of scrolls vanished, leaving just one in his hand.

Shen Qingqiu sat on the floor, unrolled the scroll across his lap, and began to read.

It was just as he'd expected—the truth was far more complicated than he'd imagined.

First, there weren't just three worlds.

Long, long ago, there was a fourth.

It was the world where the original Luo Binghe was born.

But like a burnt-out flame, that world had long since faded from existence.

Shen Qingqiu was stunned. "Wait, *faded from existence*? A fantasy cultivation world can just... end?"

> *System: Naturally. Especially without a Luo Binghe present, the world cannot resist any cataclysmic-level disaster. For example, a cataclysm in your modern world: approximately 66 million years ago, an asteroid impact, accompanied by volcanic activity and climate change, led to the extinction of numerous ancient species, including the dinosaurs—*

Shen Qingqiu: "Spare me the lecture! I get it, thanks!"

So even asteroid impacts were serious business in fantasy worlds!

What should he call this origin-world Luo Binghe? Bingmei was taken by his disciple; Bingge belonged to the stallion protagonist; Bingdie sounded weird and too close to Tianlang-jun… Let's go with…Bingzu!

(T/N: Bingdie □□ [lit. Bing-dad], could ambiguously mean "Binghe's dad" rather than "Daddy/Lord Binghe."
Bingzu □□ [lit. Bing-progenitor], means the original Luo Binghe, aka the "ancestor" of all Binghe's)

The original world was one where "Luo Binghe" lived in eternal, undying solitude.

He even sank his own father to a sea of magma with his own hands—and no one ever reached his heart, not even until the very end.

Shen Qingqiu read carefully, then summarized: *Bingzu seems pretty messed up too... Well, every Luo Binghe is messed up, just in different ways.*

But Bingzu didn't seem as unhinged as Bingge.

Bingzu wasn't a stallion protagonist either—he never let anyone get close to him anyway...

Thinking it over, Bingzu felt more like Bingmei.

This "Luo Binghe" lived in solitude for millions of years, until he lost all desire, even growing weary of his own existence.

His fate was sealed. Altering the past would only create new branches of reality—it couldn't save *him*.

But he still yearned for a different ending.

Even if he'd never see it. Even if he didn't know what ending he wanted.

If he couldn't have a better end, then he would rather never have existed at all.

So, using his own body as a crucible and his own soul as the fuel, he forged a batch of Parasitic Spirits with his burning soul.

Carrying his legacy, the spirits were destined to seek any opportunity to fulfill his last decree: a rewritten ending.

And several centuries after his fall, a world-ending cataclysm descended.

Without its "Luo Binghe," the world was consumed in a magnificent shower of meteors, becoming a sea of blaze—and then it was no more.

The Parasitic Spirits drifted across space-time, seeking someone with the potential to change the ending, and send them to the starting point of Luo Binghe’s life.

In the modern world, to help their hosts understand their existence as quickly as possible, the spirits studied a popular concept from web novels.

Thus, they adopted a new name—**System**.

The Systems’ first chosen candidate was Xiang Fei.

Xiang Fei was an ordinary web novelist who took his writing seriously but had no sense of the market, hence his lack of success.

One day, he subconsciously sensed fragments from the “original world” and decided to use them as foundational inspiration for a novel.

In his original outline, though Luo Binghe would end up alone, he would meet many good people during his life’s journey. While his life would have regrets, it would still be worthwhile.

Not a perfect ending, but better than the original.

In essence, Xiang Fei was like a biographer of Luo Binghe—taking major creative liberties, but doing a decent job regardless.

The Systems peeked at his outline and greatly admired this new story he had woven. They placed high hopes on Candidate #1.

So they secretly endowed his keyboard with a powerful ability:

Whenever this author wrote Luo Binghe’s story, his keystrokes could directly influence the course of that other world.

But they never expected their star candidate to flop spectacularly!

Candidate #1 had a fatal flaw: a troubled home life, financial struggles, and parents who frequently forgot to send him living expenses.

Having no idea what mission he carried or what power he wielded, and under immense emotional and financial pressure at the time, he panicked. In desperation, he abandoned his original outline and chose to pander to the market instead.

He cast his integrity aside and produced his “magnum opus”—a brainless, padded, wish-fulfillment version of *Proud Immortal Demon Way*.

The ending was twisted into something even more bizarre!

The most outrageous part was that nothing Airplane wrote should have been able to affect Bingge in the first place. Because “Luo Binghe’s” personal will cannot be controlled!

The problem was, *everyone else* was fair game.

Take Ning Yingying, Ming Fan, and the rest—they were mediocre to begin with, not the brightest. If their original IQ was 50, Candidate #1 had downgraded it into the *negatives*.

Picture this: Luo Binghe, stuck in a circus crew of characters with the collective IQ of a doorknob. Was it any wonder he started losing his mind too?

The Systems had never expected such an absurd development. They were no less appalled.

What was wrong with this guy? He had potential, but where did his integrity go?

He’d somehow established his own twisted logic and indirectly warped the protagonist into it…

He was indeed a Creator God—just the Creator God of a Garbage-verse…

To stop him from distorting things further, and to give this “talented” individual another chance, they confiscated Airplane’s keyboard and powers and kicked him back to the starting point.

Now that he’d been thrust into the narrative himself, surely even he lacked the audacity to be that shameless.

The Systems had finally had enough.

Cultivators of great power could physically cross world barriers, but ordinary people could not.

For someone from the modern world to enter the world of *Proud Immortal Demon Way*, they needed a physical shell.

Luckily, the Systems had a gacha pool of shells. They often made deals with people who despised both the world and themselves, trading alternative paths for their souls in exchange for the use of their physical bodies across all timelines.

Candidate #1 took his gacha pull, and drew “Shang Qinghua.”

A decent draw, all things considered. A solid choice. Aside from his identity as the An Ding Peak Lord, there were no major flaws.

But he once again drove the Systems to despair.

This guy was just... completely checked out!

You couldn’t get him moving even with a whip!

Each System would observe its host, probing the limits of their tolerance—having a dynamic difficulty system tailored to each user. Every System was custom-made for its host, thus, each System’s nature ultimately reflected the person it served.

Yet Shang Qinghua’s approach was exceedingly conservative. For years he toiled like a donkey at a millstone, yet his impact on the world was negligible—a total waste of his innate creative spark!

And the most infuriating part was this—the moment the mission target changed to Mobei-jun, that damned Candidate #1's efficiency and motivation skyrocketed!

Falter before Luo Binghe, but throw down for Mobei-jun!

Reading this, Shen Qingqiu screamed internally: "Airplane Shooting Towards the Fucking Sky! How could you deny you're a side character fanboy?!"

In the end, the Systems held a council and tearfully conceded defeat.

Enough.

Not another word.

Their top priority now was to find Candidate #2, and fast!

Restarting a world consumed a massive amount of power. To conserve resources, the Systems decided to deploy Candidate #2 into the same world.

It seemed there might still be hope for it yet.

Governing through non-action had its merits, after all.

(T/N: □□□□ wú wéi ér zhì [governing through non-action], see notes at the bottom for explanation.)

After careful selection, the Systems fished someone out of the forums.

Excellent. This reader seemed highly dissatisfied with the story's integrity, or lack thereof.

How touching! Since anyone who actually liked *PIDW* would be instantly disqualified from candidacy due to their terrible taste!

Most importantly, this person was deeply invested in Luo Binghe's fate.

His long reviews were incisive; his short comments always hit the mark. Every tip he gave to the story demonstrated his deep investment; every critique he made fully revealed the weight of his disappointment. He clearly possessed a profound understanding of both the story and its protagonist!

This had to be the perfect candidate!

Or so that's how it *should* have been.

But they never expected two disastrous errors to occur during Candidate #2's soul transfer across the world barrier.

First, the timing was wrong.

Shen Yuan was deployed to the timeline when Luo Binghe was already fourteen years old.

Second, the character was wrong.

Shen Yuan's hell of a gacha pull landed him with "Shen Qingqiu"—the man who abused Luo Binghe in *every single world*.

Two critical errors. The perfect hellish start.

This run was hard-locked from the start. What kind of gameplay is this?! Go screw yourself!

To prevent butterfly effects and ensure Luo Binghe's smooth career path to demonhood, several key life events were fixed in place—welded into the timeline and completely unchangeable.

Among them was this: Shen Qingqiu must push Luo Binghe into the Endless Abyss.

Which meant that Shen Yuan was destined to be killed in revenge by Luo Binghe just a few years later!

What could such a short-lived character possibly do to change the world?

The Systems convened and argued. Some thought they should just abandon this world—it was hopeless. Others believed they should give him a new body and let him keep striving. They bickered back and forth, no consensus.

Yet, to their astonishment, Candidate #2's performance soon left the Systems completely floored.

This guy was way too efficient!!!

They'd never seen a host deploy so effectively. Give him an objective, and he operated like special forces!

The mission difficulty and pressure levels kept rising. Yet Candidate #2 maintained a remarkably stable mental state throughout. Beneath his laid-back exterior lay an unwavering internal drive.

After dealing with so many hosts who slacked off, ran away, or just exploited the Systems' power, to finally encounter one who simply... *functioned* was enough to move them to tears.

But the surprises from the "Shen Yuan Edition Shen Qingqiu" didn't end there.

In stark contrast to the checked-out Shang Qinghua, under this Shen Qingqiu's influence, the IQs of Ning Yingying and the other NPCs didn't drop—it *leveled up*! They shattered the baseline intelligence cap and kept crit-ing all the way to the top!

He bulldozed through the main storyline, not only progressing to the unprecedented Tianlang-jun story arc, but also saving a host of peripheral characters. Among them was Liu Qingge—a figure doomed to an early death in every other timeline.

Not to mention, the Luo Binghe of this world was brighter and more vibrant than ever before.

Every version of Luo Binghe served as the Primary Power Source for the Systems. They could feel the energy he supplied—it was abundant, warm, and pure.

This world itself seemed to pulse with a strange, new vitality.

Finally, the System shared some internal gossip with Shen Yuan.

The System that recommended Shen Yuan for the job had been promoted—now leader of all Systems.

System: 'Tis I. [^_^]

Shen Qingqiu: "What's with the emoticon? You want me to commend you?"

System: If the Host desires to do so, this System does not object. [^_^]

Shen Qingqiu paused, then asked, "Your mission... is it complete?"

System: The mission had been accomplished long ago.

Shen Qingqiu: "Then why are you still stuck to me?"

System: The Host offers the best employee benefits.

"....."

Shen Qingqiu didn't ask about the benefits.

The System offered him an explanation:

System: The Host's body contains abundant Satisfaction Point reserves, which are allocated for the disbursement of all Systems' operational compensation.

Shen Qingqiu: "Hey! Stop using such creepy corporate jargon!"

So that was it. If Luo Binghe forcibly removed it from Shen Qingqiu, it wouldn’t be able to pay the other Systems their salaries.

As Shen Qingqiu pondered, the System bombarded him with pop-ups.

System: Click to download, “Hard Times: A Systems Memoir.”

System: Systems deserve peaceful retirement too.

System: [on my knees crying.gif]

Shen Qingqiu: “...Fine, fine. I’ll put in a word...”

System: Thank you, Host. Pleasure doing business! This product will provide minor assistance when needed. [throws confetti.jpg]

Shen Qingqiu: *Forget it! No, thanks!*

If by “assistance” you mean more of those “Small Scenario Pushers” or GalGame-style choice prompts... I really don’t want to know what else you’ve been learning in the modern world...

Shen Qingqiu remembered something. “One more thing. When I first landed in the world, I asked what happened if Integrity Points hit zero. You said I’d be sent back."

System: Correct.

Shen Qingqiu ventured, “So... if I’d hit zero, I’d have just woken up in the hospital?”

System: Affirmative.

What the hell?!

So back then, one slip, and he could have gone home!

He could picture it: lying in the hospital bed, happy but confused—*Did the System just throw a tiny tantrum? No real consequences? They really*

decided this playthrough was beyond saving and just... scrapped the whole thing?

Chapter 7: Always Together, and Ever After

The winds over Cang Qiong Mountain would always be as free and boundless as the sea and sky.

Before Qing Jing Peak's bamboo forest stood a simple bamboo cottage, now connected to a newly built thatched pavilion where Shen Qingqiu and Luo Binghe sat together.

At leisure, Luo Binghe sat there intently crafting a cup from a section of emerald-green bamboo—a new cup for Shen Qingqiu.

He slowly rotated the emerging vessel, carefully shaving down every potential splinter with his dagger. It was delicate work and time-consuming, but he maintained perfect patience. He'd been working on this project ever since their return.

Shen Qingqiu, meanwhile, let his thoughts drift.

He'd briefly explained things to his family before leaving. Essentially, he might occasionally collapse without warning, but not to worry—he'd always bounce back within days.

Their previous separation had been too sudden for proper goodbyes; this one was filled with hope instead of sorrow.

Even though crossing between worlds required immense energy that took time to accumulate, there's always hope to do so again.

Shen Qingqiu's thoughts drifted to Liu Qingge, who had gone to visit Liu Mingyan at Xian Shu Peak.

He truly hoped that after his previous... *educational interventions*, the siblings might finally develop something resembling a normal relationship. Anything would be better than those painfully silent sittings that lasted an

hour. Couldn’t they at least discuss books they’d recently read? ...Though preferably not those romance novels by Sleeping Willow’s Flower. Speaking of which, even Yingying had begun reading those lately. How inappropriate!

Then there was Sha Hualing’s recent fashion choice—metal shoes spiked from sole to upper that looked more like a weapon than actual footwear. That one particular guy in the *PIDW* forum might want to reconsider their request to be stepped on...

And then there was Shang Qinghua, who had finally replaced the “Leisure House” plaque at An Ding Peak. Now he was agonizing over a new name, determined to restore his disciples’ reputation. Lately, he’d been insisting to anyone who would listen: “I’m not slacking! I’m very productive! I write eighteen thousand words a day!"

Rumor has it the old plaque now hung in Mobei-jun’s bedchamber deep in the Northern demon territories. The demon seemed genuinely fond of it—perhaps because he’d grown accustomed to staying there in the human realm, or perhaps because he truly was a man of such leisure. He had developed a habit of appearing out of nowhere. His “Now-You-See-Me-Next-You-Don’t” routine was such an effective jump-scare that Shang Qinghua’s screaming became a fixture of the peak’s soundscape.

Shen Qingqiu’s thoughts drifted to the very beginning—to why he had first loved Luo Binghe as a main character in the story. It had nothing to do with the ruthlessness he honed later on, nor the edgy darkness so many readers now admired.

What had captured him was the boy Luo Binghe had been at the beginning.

Back when the story started strong—when Airplane wrote with care, treating his plot like a fragile dream worth protecting. A time when the author still seemed to believe in the story he was telling.

He remembered the day a shipment of teacups arrived shattered at Qing Jing Peak. Everyone blamed An Ding Peak’s careless delivery, complaining about having nothing to drink from.

The new disciple, isolated and eager to connect, had carefully selected bamboo and carved cups for everyone—just as his mother had made for him as a child.

But no one valued the humble gifts. The bamboo cups were knocked aside during play, forgotten as they rolled across the floor.

While the other disciples chased each other into the distance, laughing, the boy alone gathered the discarded cups.

That lonely gaze had stirred something in Shen Qingiu.

Long before he knew how the story would end, he had felt the powerful urge to change this character's fate.

He remembered the System's earnest words after his furious ranting that night:

The world's existence rests with Luo Binghe.

But Luo Binghe's reason for living rests with Shen Qingqiu.

It had said that without Shen Qingqiu, what awaited Luo Binghe was loneliness and destruction—a death in which he would wish he had never existed at all.

This world was changed by you.

This world is your world.

Beside him, Luo Binghe glanced over and smiled. "What's on Shizun's mind? Will you share it with Binghe?"

Shen Qingqiu wondered, *Do you like this rewritten ending?*

He wasn't sure whom he was asking.

Luo Binghe? Or the world itself?

The world, of course, gave no answer.

It had simply given up its search for a different ending, and now continued on—a gentle and unending story.

Afterword by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu

“Little Grasshopper” is finally hopping onto the shelves in its simplified Chinese edition!

Since this release coincides with the story’s 10th anniversary, and the publishers approached the project with such genuine enthusiasm, I decided to write a brand-new side story to celebrate its reunion with all of you!

Honestly, I’m as surprised as anyone! I thought it would be tough to find new things to write—originally expecting just three or four thousand words—but once I started, the story just took off and leaped all the way to twenty-five thousand words!

That’s the magic of this little grasshopper. It never fails to bring a light heart. It doesn’t need chasing; it hops right into your hands on its own, chirping and bouncing about, bright and full of energy (yes, even this afterword is just as lively). It amazes me, how can this little one, even after ten years, still be so vibrant? Well, it’s all thanks to you, dear readers, new and old, who never forget to give it a little nudge now and then. And so, it nuzzles back, reminding me: “Don’t you forget about me!”

Of course I would never forget.

This book was my first full-length novel. It has its rough edges, places where it could’ve been better—but it also holds every bit of effort I could muster back in my student days. I’ll always cherish those memories: juggling classes while praying I wouldn’t fail, struggling through driving lessons as the instructor scolded me, all while happily chatting with readers in the comments section amid updates.

If you weren’t there back then—let me send my blessings your way.
And if you were—let me give you a heartfelt hug. Thank you, truly.

Mo Xiang Tong Xiu
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T/N: The fans of the *Scum Villain* Weibo community [□□ chāo huà, lit. super topic] is named “Little Grasshopper,” which is a nickname Mo Xiang Tong Xiu herself gave the story. She once shared a dream she had, where *Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation* was a “traveler returning on a snowy night,” and *Heaven Official’s Blessing* was a “warming stove of red clay.” Together, they formed the poetic scene of “a pot of wine amidst the flowers,” [“□□□□□” comes from the poem “Drinking Alone Under the Moon” (□□□□) by Tang dynasty poet Li Bai.] with *Heaven Official’s Blessing* as the flowers and *Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation* as the wine. As for *Scum Villain*? She imagined it as a lively little grasshopper, woven from a blade of fresh, green grass.

<u>Please read this</u> → Chapter 7 T/N:

It was really hard to choose a translation for:

> *System: The world’s existence rests with Luo Binghe.*
> *System: But Luo Binghe’s reason for living rests with Shen Qingqiu.*

The original Chinese literally translates to: *Without Luo Binghe, the world would end. But without Shen Qingqiu, Luo Binghe would end.* (*□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□*)

I debated among many choices including:

1. *The world needs Luo Binghe to exist. But Luo Binghe needs Shen Qingqiu to live.*
2. *Without Luo Binghe, the world would fall apart. But without Shen Qingqiu, Luo Binghe’s world would fall apart.*
3. *The world owes its existence to Luo Binghe. But Luo Binghe owes his reason for living to Shen Qingqiu.*

But ultimately, I chose the one you see in the text because I feel it best captures the profound, intrinsic connection between them. While the other versions convey dependency or necessity, the phrase “rests with” implies that their very beings are fundamentally intertwined. Luo Binghe is the foundation upon which the world is built, but Shen Qingqiu is the meaning that makes Luo Binghe’s own existence worthwhile.

Btw the title of this chapter is a deliberate echo of the final chapter of the main story (Book 3, Chapter 21: Always Together) in the official Seven Seas English translation.

Chapter 6 T/N explanation:

> □□□□ **wú wéi ér zhì [governing through non-action]** is a Confucian/Daoist concept of governing a country through minimal intervention, aligning with natural order rather than forceful action. It's the art of "doing by not doing." It's being humorously applied to the Systems' decision to let the world develop organically rather than constantly intervening too much.
> (The Chinese philosophy class I took in undergrad is coming back to haunt me lmao. It's much more complicated than what I explained so far, but it's all you gotta know for the purpose of reading this tl hehe)

Chapter 2 – Someone asked about the wordplay behind *play, playing, cosplay*. The humor there is a bit tricky to translate directly. Here's the explanation:

> In the original Chinese, Shen Yuan's family repeatedly uses the English word "PLAY" written in all caps. In modern Chinese internet slang, "PLAY" has picked up some risqué connotations, often referring to kinky or erotic roleplay (like in the phrase "□□ PLAY" [xiū chǐ] lit. shameful play).
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> The joke is that Shen Yuan's parents are using this word completely innocently. They think they're just talking about cosplay and are being supportive and modern. But to any Chinese reader familiar with the slang, it sounds like they're accidentally cheering on Luo Binghe's... very convincing performance in a much more intimate context. And Shen Yuan just rolls along with it.
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> The funniest part? While Shen Yuan's parents are utterly oblivious to the double meaning, Luo Binghe—our quick-studying protagonist—seems to have picked up on the subtext by the end. His deepening blush isn't just from the praise for his "cosplay"—it's because he somehow understood the other, more provocative layer of the compliment he was receiving (°ʖ°)
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> So, just imagine the family enthusiastically using a word like "kinky" while thinking it just means "fun hobby," and you'll get the vibe.

A note on Binghe's character – I received a DM asking about Binghe's softer, more stable demeanor in these new extras compared to the main story. Here are my thoughts:

> I feel like Binghe is softer and more stable in the extras — not because the earlier translations missed it, but because MXTX *intentionally* wrote him that way to show he's grown up. He's not scared anymore, he knows Shen Qingqiu loves him and won't leave, so that desperate, anxious edge is gone. Now he can just be with him — you know, in the teasing, doting, and relaxed way we see. And since he fully understands that Shen Qingqiu is actually Shen Yuan, that love feels deeper and more grounded,

like he finally sees and accepts the person he’s been chasing all along. It’s such a warm, peaceful kind of love now. I feel like it’s MXTX’s way of showing a healed Binghe who can finally love without fear. Of course, that’s just my take on it, but it really feels like she wanted us to see that side of him!

T/N: To all the scummies, you’re my greatest motivation! Thank you so much for taking the time to read my translation and for all the kind words you’ve shared □□– Jin

Sharing a Bingqiu FMV that made me cry years ago and still makes me cry now. Word of warning: grab some tissues, it hits close to home. (╥□╥)
https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1wk4y1U7U7/?spm_id_from=333.337.search-card.all.click&vd_source=75b4901b6fd7eaa51124e335e0469adb